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National Intelligence Council

Secret

Castro Agonistes: The Mounting Dilemmas and Frustrations of Cuba's *Caudillo*

National Intelligence Council Memorandum

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November 1981

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National Intelligence Council

Secret

Castro Agonistes: The Mounting Dilemmas and Frustrations of Cuba's *Caudillo* [redacted]

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National Intelligence Council Memorandum

Information available as of 15 November 1981 was used in the preparation of this report.

This Memorandum was coordinated within the National Intelligence Council (NIC) and the National Foreign Assessment Center. Comments are welcome and should be addressed to its author, [redacted]

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Castro Agonistes: The Mounting Dilemmas and Frustrations of Cuba's *Caudillo* (U)

Key Judgments

The Castro regime is facing its most serious domestic problems since it came to power in 1959. Familiar social, political, and economic stringencies that generated discontent in the 1960s and '70s, have been greatly aggravated since 1979 by serious demographic and generational pressures, major foreign policy setbacks, and Castro's declining effectiveness as the prophetic leader of the Revolution.

A critical generation gap has become one of Castro's greatest preoccupations:

- Thousands of Cubans born during the early 1960s baby boom have reached maturity over the last few years in a deeply troubled economy in which jobs, housing, and other resources are scarce.
- Cuban youths have already turned to crime and "antisocial" behavior, and as growing numbers come of age during the remainder of the decade, the likelihood of significant opposition to Castro will probably increase.
- Castro seems obsessed with that half of the population under 25, and with the dilemmas of how to inculcate in them the myths and hopes of his generation of revolutionaries.

As these and other pressures have increased, Castro's leadership style and his public mood have changed dramatically. His numerous speeches since December 1979 reveal that he:

- Has been dwelling inordinately on the past, and particularly on his exploits as a young revolutionary.
- Is disturbed that his plan to be an energetic leader of the nonaligned movement was shattered by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.
- Is brooding about the intractable problems of Cuba's underdevelopment and the bleak prospects for the economy during the remainder of the century.
- Has replaced his utopian visions of the 1960s and '70s with a dark preoccupation with holocaust and apocalypse.
- Fears that his regime will have to defend itself in a military conflict with the United States in which a large portion of the Cuban population would remain neutral.

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Castro's popularity and credibility are probably lower than ever before, and are likely to continue deteriorating:

- The probability of idle youths rioting or engaging in other overt acts of opposition will increase through the 1980s.
- There is perhaps one chance in three that rising social and economic tensions will result in significant opposition.
- There is a good chance that Castro will decide to launch another minicultural revolution in Cuba.
- Although there is no evidence that any top Cuban leaders are plotting, a coup against Castro is, for the first time in 20 years, no longer unthinkable. To have the slightest chance, Cuban figures would have to mount their coup simultaneously against Castro, his brother Raul, and key hardline officials.

Tensions between the United States and Cuba will continue to rise, and Castro will be an even more dangerous adversary than in the past:

- He is very likely to pursue vendettas against leaders or governments in Latin America that he considers proxies of the United States.
- He will vigorously exploit every opportunity for revolutionary breakthroughs in El Salvador, Guatemala, and other countries to refurbish his and Cuba's revolutionary credentials.
- The United States Interests Section, the Guantanamo Naval Base, and US citizens in Cuba will be increasingly likely targets of abuse.
- It is also highly probable that Cuba will aim anti-US broadcasts at American minority groups, in retaliation for US transmissions to Cuba.
- Even more extreme or irrational actions, which could lead to military conflict with the United States, will be more likely than ever before.
- If, as seems likely, Castro comes under greater pressure and psychological strain, there is a chance—in the range of 20 percent—that he will try to provoke a military conflict with the United States. He could see this as an opportunity to rally the youth, to strengthen his regime and personal position, and to attract international support.
- The greater likelihood, nonetheless, remains that Castro's position will continue to decline, given the absence of US-Cuban hostilities.

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Castro Agonistes: The Mounting Dilemmas and Frustrations of Cuba's *Caudillo* (U)

Introduction

Fidel Castro is struggling with a convergence of old and new problems that appear to be more threatening to the stability of his regime than any it has weathered during nearly 23 years in power. The familiar factors that generated popular discontent in the 1960s and '70s persist: a deeply troubled economy increasingly dependent on exporting sugar and on Soviet largess; a totalitarian regime unable to motivate or incorporate a large percentage of the people or to overcome the results of years of poor management and planning; and an inordinate commitment of human and other resources to costly foreign involvements that pay few domestic dividends.

These and other problems were greatly aggravated in 1979 and 1980 by natural disasters, major foreign policy setbacks, and especially by some of the most serious errors of judgment over public policy that Castro has ever made. One, the decision to encourage visits by Cuban-Americans, had powerfully destabilizing results, after about 100,000 exiles traveled to the island. In the aftermath of their visits, crime, vandalism, worker absenteeism, and other forms of discontent rose sharply, and were met with increasing repression. Popular malaise was further aroused when Castro and other leaders demanded greater sacrifice and effort, though grimly warning that significant improvements in social and economic conditions would not be possible before the end of the century.

By April 1980 public discontent was probably more widespread in Cuba than at any time since the mid-1960s. Yet, Castro and other top leaders seemed surprisingly unaware of its intensity until more than 10,000 Cubans swarmed onto the grounds of the Peruvian Embassy in Havana seeking asylum. In ensuing months, angry confrontations with the United States and about a half dozen Caribbean Basin countries unequivocally established the tone and new directions of Castro's more militant foreign policy. His personal frustration and ire, vented repeatedly in belligerent and rambling speeches, were reminiscent of his erratic and highly emotional public behavior during the 1960s.

These and other dimensions of Cuba's more pressing internal problems are widely appreciated, but other, perhaps more significant factors affecting the stability of the Castro government have received less attention. One of the most important is the critical generation gap that clearly has become one of Castro's greatest preoccupations. In speech after speech over the last few years he has addressed the ennui and discontent of the younger generation and has seemed at times to be obsessed with the dilemma of how to inculcate in the youth the myths and hopes of his generation of revolutionaries. At 55, Castro presides over a nation where about 86 percent of the people are younger than he is, and where about 52 percent are under 25 and have no memory of his exploits in winning power from the Batista dictatorship.

As his oratory increasingly has dwelled on these concerns, Castro's gloomy public mood has reflected other nagging problems as well. He is profoundly

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disturbed that his plans to be a forceful leader of the nonaligned movement—a realistic hope in the fall of 1979 when he assumed that role—have been in ruins since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that December. Many of his speeches include ruminations about the intractable problems of underdevelopment in Cuba and elsewhere in the Third World. But, whereas his addresses at the Nonaligned Conference plenary in Havana in September 1979 and at the United Nations the following month were full of high expectations and demands for a restructuring of North-South relations, his rhetoric over the last year or so has been increasingly pessimistic. In part, Castro's dark broodings about underdevelopment reflect his grudging, fatalistic acceptance since Afghanistan of Cuba's inescapable vassalage to the Soviet Union.

Especially startling for longtime observers of Castro's public behavior and rhetoric is his persistent emphasis this year on themes related to holocaust and apocalypse. An apparently despairing Castro has frequently masked his rising fears of conflict with the United States with bravado about how true Cuban revolutionaries must fight to the last man. His apocalyptic mood is often quite explicit. He has repeatedly used the word "holocaust," has mused about Cuba and the world after nuclear warfare between the superpowers, and has admonished his audiences to increase their vigilance and revolutionary worth in the face of impending disaster.

This attitude is in stark contrast to the utopian visions and effervescent schemes that the Cuban leader enunciated consistently in the 1960s and '70s. His shift from utopian to apocalyptic visions probably reflects the realization that his unfulfilled promises of a better future have already begun to undermine his legitimacy as the prophetic leader of the Revolution and the stability of his government. Even his exaggerated efforts to use the once effective theme of US aggression have not succeeded in motivating the populace. His gloomy predictions about conflict with the United States may in fact be most unsettling to that large sector of the population about which he is most concerned. The youth of revolutionary Cuba, like youth everywhere, are most readily inspired and mobilized by utopian visions like those Castro once used so effectively.

This investigation of Castro's changing outlook, mood, and performance, and his key preoccupations, is based largely on his oratory over the last two years. No leader in modern times—probably ever—has left a personal record so voluminous and complete as Castro has in the millions of words he has spoken on the record since he came to power in 1959. From a high of at least a hundred major addresses in that first year, he has averaged about 20 to 25 annually since. In many, like the address to the Second Congress of the Cuban Communist Party last December and that at the United Nations in September 1960 (the longest ever delivered there), he droned on for over five hours. Many, especially in the early years, were delivered extemporaneously, and there have been numerous occasions when new policy directions sprang from seemingly spontaneous utterances.

Discourse is a vital function for Castro, an integral part not only of his charismatic style but of his psychological composition. He relies, of course, on considerable doses of deception and camouflage in his public appearances, and until recently showed an uncanny facility for adjusting his tone, style, and thrust to particular audiences. Nonetheless, his speeches have been highly reliable gauges of his changing attitudes, interests, priorities, and expectations. Often—as in the Mariel boatlift last year—they have provided warning of actions he would soon take. Over the last two years, moreover, Castro's speeches—content and delivery—have provided increasingly useful insights into his evolving emotional state and effectiveness as a leader.

The Generation Gap [1]

Among the innumerable developments that Castro could not have anticipated when he began to govern as a 32-year-old revolutionary was that the hopes and changes he helped unleash would contribute to an

[1] See *Cuba: The Demography of Revolution,* by Sergio Diaz and Lisandro Perez, 1981.

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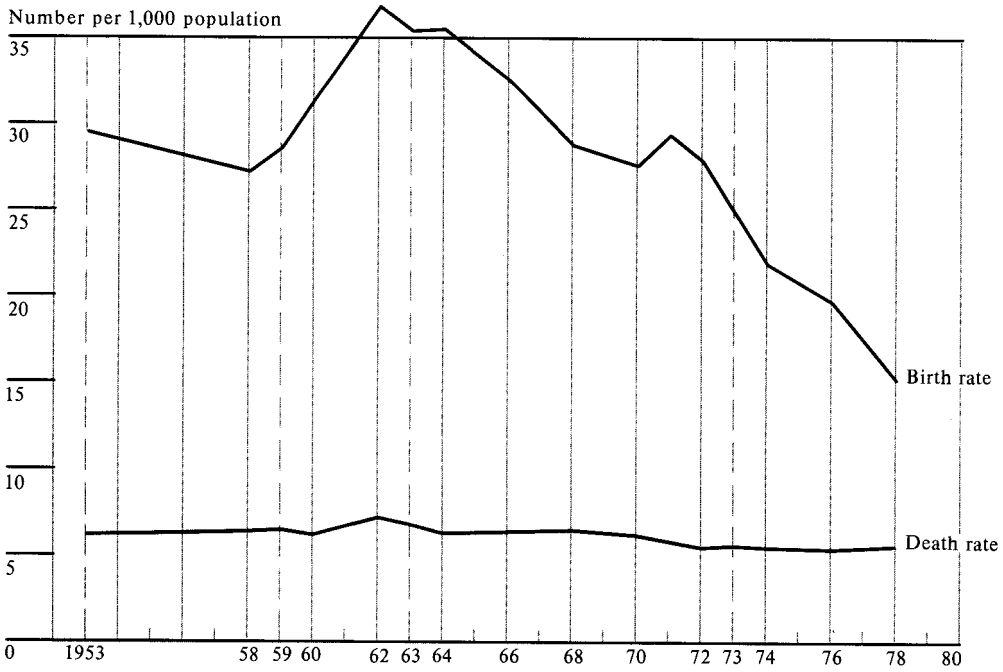
unprecented surge in the Cuban birth rate (see figure 1). For the next five years it climbed steadily, from 26.1 births per thousand in 1958 to 35.1 per thousand in 1963. Then, as expectations were dashed, it fell sharply in ensuing years and now ranks among the lowest in the less developed countries. As Castro has noted with seeming irritation on two occasions, the structure of Cuba's population has created enormous practical and political difficulties for the regime (see figure 2).

Children born in the peak years of the baby boom are now in the 15- to 19-year-old age group. After remaining relatively constant from 1968 to 1974, the numbers in this cohort surged to a level in 1980 that was more than 50 percent greater than in previous years. Because most entrants to the labor force fall in this group, and because of economic stringencies, many have not found work. In his December 1979 "secret speech," Castro admitted that "some tens of thousands of youth are out of work." The vandalism, crime, and "antisocial" behavior that has preoccupied Castro is probably also confined largely to this age group. Many of these youths are at or close to the age of marriage, in a society that apparently prefers almost universal and early marriage. But shortages of housing, consumer goods, and services will greatly frustrate their plans to establish new households or to start their own families.

Figure 1

Birth and Death Rates: Cuba, 1953–79



Note: Birth and especially death rates before 1968 may be understated because of incomplete registration.

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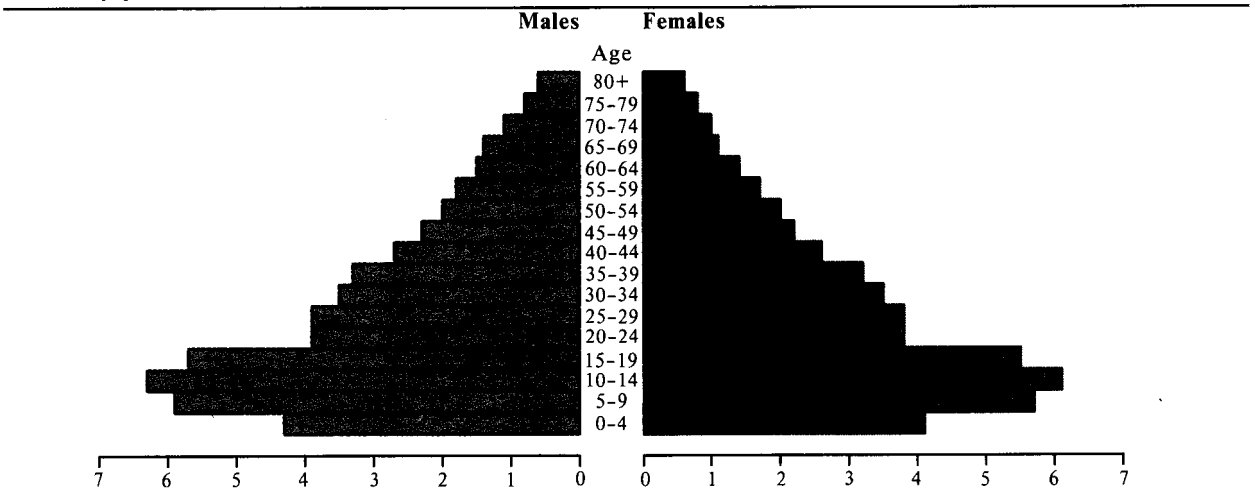
Figure 2

Population Age Pyramid: Cuba, 1979



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This generation, in addition, is highly educated and schooled entirely under revolutionary auspices. In the nursery, primary, and secondary schools, children have been a favored class in Cuba, receiving larger rations of better food and goods than the general population. Because of this treatment and the relatively more favorable economic conditions in the mid-1970s, youths in this age group probably had generally high expectations. On graduation, however, they increasingly have had to confront the harsh realities of a constricting and niggardly economy in which their skills and interests find few constructive outlets.

An even larger cohort in the Cuban population is the present 10- to 14-year-old age group born in the trailing end of the baby-boom years. Castro has said that enrollment in middle-level schools is now 13 times higher than in 1959. The employment, housing, and other prospects of these children as they come of age through the remainder of the 1980s are likely to be even more bleak than for the 15- to 19-year-olds. Without sustained economic growth and development in the next five years—which is highly unlikely—the Cuban leadership will probably confront mounting political, social, and economic dilemmas as it tries to absorb these new generations. A cruel irony that is certainly not lost on Castro is that much of the enormous investment made on these youths over the last several years is in infrastructure that will not be needed once the baby-boom cohorts come of age. Thus, when Castro noted last December that "more than 970 schools" were built in the previous five years, he surely realized that many of them will stand

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empty by the 1990s as the number of school-age children rapidly declines.

Castro's preoccupation with the numerous problems of the baby-boom generation has been evident in his oratory. Few of his speeches have been without some reference to the youth, and in many he has gone on at length. He undoubtedly fears that they are a potentially explosive counterrevolutionary force both now and in the decades ahead. He may be concerned that many of the young have already been "contaminated" as a result of the visits by Cuban-American exiles and the ever-present allure of prosperity and freedom across the Florida Strait. Probably in large part because of these concerns, Castro has maliciously attacked the planned Radio Marti broadcasts to be sponsored by the United States. He knows how troubling sophisticated programing could be, having boasted last December that there is now on the average more than one radio per Cuban family. Ironically, the medium that he once used so effectively in achieving and consolidating power now has become one of his greatest vulnerabilities.

Castro's obsession with Cuban youth often seems, moreover, to have a mean and petty quality. He often seems to be speaking condescendingly to them, to be preaching righteously, and to be reminding them of their flaws. There are numerous veiled threats, as when he calls for "more criticism and self-criticism" among the youth or when he stated that "we must act with responsibility and firmness in the formation of the future generations." In a sense Castro has assumed the role of a fundamentalist shepherd vehemently trying to collect his wayward flock. But unlike his largely successful evangelism of the 1960s and early '70s, his sermons increasingly dwell on threats of fire and brimstone rather than the rewards and pleasures of the revolutionary faith. It seems that Castro actually resents many of these children of the Revolution, and may regret having favored them over almost all other groups in Cuba.

Castro's increasingly cynical view of the youth is also suggested by the demographic shell game that he plays with them. In part because so many in the baby-boom generation and others now in their twenties cannot be employed, housed, or productively occupied in Cuba, tens of thousands have been sent abroad. More than 35,000 Cuban troops are in Angola and Ethiopia; at least 5,000 civilian and military advisers are in Nicaragua; and thousands more are assigned to nearly 30 other developing countries. On 26 July 1980 Castro claimed that 50,000 Cubans are providing "exemplary services" abroad. Some, like the 1,500 doctors in Third World countries, are probably among the best and brightest of their generation, but have scant prospects of being able to use their skills in their own country.

Large numbers are also being sent to Soviet Bloc countries, either to study or work as trainees. There are 12,000 Cubans in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. The Soviet Union itself will probably increasingly become a temporary home for thousands of others, and some 5,000 to 6,000 are studying there now. Castro has actually stated that he would like to send 10,000 to Siberia to cut timber for Cuban construction projects. Perhaps in an attempt at black humor, he added that at least "it would not be as hot there."

Castro recognizes, of course, that these means of alleviating some of the population pressure are temporary. He worries no doubt about the domestic repercussions if the Cuban troops in Africa were asked to leave or if the East Europeans grew weary of the often disruptive presence of large numbers of Cubans. Largely for these reasons, Castro strongly prefers the permanent solution offered only by another massive emigration to the United States. He has stated publicly that he might launch another sealift of refugees like the Mariel exodus last year and the one from Camarioca in 1965. The pressures to do so again are likely to rise steadily through the 1980s, perhaps even reaching such critical intensity at times that he will take almost any risk to rid himself of a few hundred thousand to 1 or 2 million people.

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Remembrance of Past Glories

It is largely because of his preoccupation with motivating the youth that Castro has been dwelling in his public addresses on past revolutionary struggles and victories. In at least 10 speeches this year, he has exulted in events as wide ranging as the 19th-century struggles of the Cuban independence fighters Marti and Maceo, his own experiences as a youthful revolutionary, and the victory at the Bay of Pigs, and several times has mentioned the difficult days of the 1962 Missile Crisis. At least twice he has explicitly acknowledged the fundamental objective of this large, often emotional body of rhetoric: to forge a symbolic bond linking all generations of Cuban revolutionaries. He closed one speech, for instance, with a reference to the "heroes of the past, the heroes of the present, and the heroes of the future."

It is more interesting to observers of Castro's behavior and performance, however, that his self-assigned mission increasingly has become a highly personal odyssey into his own past. Castro has traveled often this year to the eastern provinces—the old Oriente—where he was born and raised, where he first announced himself as a violent revolutionary in 1953 with the assault on the Moncada army barracks, and where he disembarked from the yacht Granma in 1956 to begin a two-year insurgency in the Sierra Maestra mountains. In six major addresses in towns and villages scattered through that area, he has recalled—often vividly and passionately—details of those activities. These speeches seem ripe with clues to Castro's often highly charged emotional state over the last two years.

The memories he has invoked as lessons for the youth have been largely concerned with death, privation, and sacrifice. In Manzanillo, where he dedicated a new hospital last January to his old friend Celia Sanchez, he extemporized at some length about the meaning of her life and of the contributions of other "fallen comrades." Sanchez, who was one of Castro's most intimate confidantes since the late 1950s, had recently died of cancer. [2] In Guisa about a week later, he rambled on again about the difficulties of the Sierra Maestra insurgency, recounting in gory detail how another "comrade" had died. In May, in a village in Guantanamo Province, he lapsed into a similar remembrance speaking by name of five obscure young guerrillas who fought with him in the Sierra and died in battle.

In these and a few other public appearances this year, Castro has actually seemed to lapse into soliloquy. In desultory recollections of his struggles as a young guerrilla, he has seemed to lose contact with his audiences and to be speaking more for his own edification. The most dramatic example of such unprecedented behavior was in the speech he delivered last July on Children's Day, in a small town in Granma Province. Castro emphasized at the outset that "the revolution has certainly concerned itself with the new generation," and enumerated details of the investment it has made in schools, day care centers, and recreational facilities. Then, in another unprecedented reflection of his unusual mood of late, he recalled intimate details of his boyhood before reminiscing at length about minutiae of the 1950s insurgency. He continued in an apparently uncontrolled monologue for at least several more minutes.

This inordinate preoccupation with a faded, heroic past is reflected in other, more tangible ways as well. Castro announced at the Second Party Congress last December, for instance, that 40 new museums were established in Cuba in the preceding five years, and that "91 national monuments and 59 local monuments" were dedicated. He also praised the History Institute, which he revealed has been managing an

[2] The suicide in July 1980 of Haydee Santamaria—another of the small group of women revolutionaries who were with Castro during the insurgency—was another major blow to him personally. See "Cuba: Death of Two Heroines," *Latin America Review*, 22 August 1980.

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extensive research and publishing program to educate the population in the struggles and achievements of the Revolution. The fruit of that program has been an excruciatingly detailed recounting of even the most insignificant episodes of the insurgency. One long chapter, published last October, is devoted entirely to the events of a week in February 1957 as well as to the role of a previously unheralded peasant farmer and his dutiful wife.

This trivialization of history probably will have little of the intended influence on the young generations, and it may even be counterproductive. It is widely known outside Cuba that the realities of Castro's two-year guerrilla campaign were far less inspiring or interesting than the myths created about it later. The ranks of the guerrillas and their peasant supporters were small, the struggle was largely confined to an isolated area, and there were few significant battles or urban campaigns that involved large numbers of people as there were in Nicaragua in 1979 or more recently in El Salvador. Thus, for the average Cuban youth—educated and traveled—the history campaign may actually tend to demythologize the Revolution.

The Frustrations of Underdevelopment

For Castro, the past that he relishes seems increasingly to substitute for the harsh realities of the present. Over the last two years, there have been few positive developments in internal Cuban affairs, and sometimes—as in the history campaign—even these examples tend toward the absurd. He has made much, for instance, of a "revolutionary" dairy cow—Ubre Blanca—that he claims produced almost 90 liters of milk the day before the 26th of July anniversary celebrations this year. Castro and the regime have generated considerable propaganda about the animal. In October 1980 there was even more fanfare surrounding the flight of the first Cuban astronaut, who Castro was at least better able to hold up to the youth as an example.

Castro also refers often to Cuba's accomplishments in international athletic competition, education, and public health, but even in those areas in which he has been humiliated. In mid-October he publicly lost his temper after a Cuban baseball team lost to one from the United States, and he criticized the players and the managers. It has been even more embarrassing, however, that over the last year or so the credibility of Cuba's much flaunted public health services has been seriously undermined. Much to Castro's consternation, five human, animal, and crop diseases have reached epidemic proportions in Cuba. With Job-like resignation, he has referred to them as "the five plagues," though he blames the United States for covertly introducing them.

Castro is clearly preoccupied with the numerous symptoms of Cuba's intractable underdevelopment, and angry that after nearly 23 years conditions in many areas are worse than when he started. His speeches reflect a growing interest and expertise in development economics and international finance. He has been able, partially at least, to overcome his previous antipathy for economic theory. After a lengthy discussion of economics in one speech, for example, he stopped in the middle of a thought and apologized to his audience for lecturing on arcane matters. In April 1980 he delivered the inaugural address to the meeting of Third World economists in Havana. In that speech, and others, he has provided a variety of clues to the many facets of his profound frustration about Cuba's economic plight and his narrowing options for dealing with it.

He reserves particular enmity for certain Third World countries that have achieved high rates of economic growth. During the Havana economics conference, he lashed out at Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan for their "deforming industrialization,"—although secretly he probably admires the ability of those countries to industrialize and stimulate their economies without becoming vassals. Similarly, he has attacked the Chilean military government for following Chicago School theories, failing to acknowledge, however, the high economic growth achieved in that country in the last several years. His strong animosity toward the Venezuelan Government is probably in part attributable to the oil wealth of that country, and its willingness to use it for leverage in its foreign policy.

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Although there is no evidence, either in his rhetoric or elsewhere, Castro almost certainly is chafing increasingly under the yoke of Cuba's mounting dependence on the Soviet Union. He indicated last December that trade with Soviet Bloc countries, which amounted to 56 percent of Cuba's external commerce in 1975, had grown to 78 percent by 1979. A large percentage of future sugar production is earmarked for the USSR, and Cuba increasingly is becoming a largely inefficient tropical outpost in the "international socialist division of labor." It is unlikely, furthermore, that Havana will be able to develop significant new export markets during the remainder of the 1980s. In 1986, in addition, Cuba is scheduled to begin repayment of its considerable debt to the USSR. This grim outlook, especially when compared to the more favorable prospects of so many other developing nations, has greatly contributed to Castro's apparent despondency.

From Utopia to Apocalypse

During the first several years after he won power, Castro's romanticism and nationalism provided the basis for his enormous charismatic appeal. Later, his uncanny ability to raise new and alluring schemes out of the ashes of ones that had failed provided constant renewal and hope for large numbers of Cubans. His utopian proposals, elaborately expounded in his oratory, were often as unlikely as they were inspiring: instant industrialization; coffee plantations in the tropical lowlands; a horticultural "green belt" extending for miles around Havana; idyllic cooperative farming; a moneyless society; a bureaucracy-free government through mass participation; a 10-million-ton sugar harvest.

Year after year these and other impossible dreams were hatched, tried, and abandoned. Partly to compensate for these failures, Castro strutted about the world stage playing a quixotic role that by the mid-1970s finally began to pay important dividends for him and the USSR in many countries of the Third World. The apogee of his international utopianism was perhaps achieved when he spoke at the United Nations in October 1979 in his new role as leader of the nonaligned movement and as self-appointed spokesman for the poor and oppressed people of the world.

Over the last two years, however, Castro's utopian visions increasingly have been replaced by apocalyptic ones. Rather than concocting "solutions" or distractions from Cuba's problems as he did in the past, Castro has been dwelling instead on the problems themselves. Furthermore, he is constantly emphasizing that the problems are more threatening and awesome than ever before. In July 1980 he said, "what is at stake . . . is the fate of humanity, the world." The following September he warned that "the future for the immense majority of mankind is a gloomy one." Last December he employed similar hyperbole, claiming that "the human race has never experienced an era like this one." And most recently, on 24 October 1981, he said that "the present cannot be compared to any other time of mankind."

These apocalyptic visions take various forms. One, frequently reiterated, is that the world faces another cataclysmic economic depression. He has said, for example, that "the world is on the verge of an unprecedented economic and financial catastrophe." He predicts numerous suicides and other horrible repercussions. More typically, however, the nightmare he propounds in public is of nuclear holocaust. On 24 October 1981, he said that a world war "would lead not only to the deaths of thousands, or hundreds of thousands, or millions, or tens of millions, or hundreds of millions, but that a war would lead to the end of mankind."

On 15 September 1981, he said that US defense buildups will "lead to nothing else but a final holocaust." On a few occasions he has used the same kind of apocalyptic visions to arrive at an ostensibly more optimistic view: for example, "we do not accept the notion that a world holocaust is inevitable"; and "we do not accept the idea of the inevitability of war." But in these statements and in a number of others this year in which he has protested that he "is not a pessimist" and that "we will always be optimists," Castro appears to be attempting a kind of public self-exorcism. Such revealing efforts to disguise his somber mood usually are contradicted almost in the next

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breath, moreover, as on 24 October when he concluded, "well, to die honorably is a good way to behave and act."

These generalized visions of world disaster are usually used in tandem with Castro's immediate concern, that Cuba will have to defend itself militarily against the United States. Since the Republican Party national convention last year, he has come increasingly to believe that he and his regime are gravely threatened. His attacks on President Reagan have become increasingly vicious, and he has also vilified Vice President Bush, Secretary Haig, and Ambassador Kirkpatrick. Castro's mounting apprehension about threats from the United States has taken many forms. He has seemed obsessed on several occasions with proving that the United States has used chemical or bacteriological agents to sow disease in Cuba, and has repeatedly revealed his fear that Cuba will be blockaded.

He is most concerned about large-scale military conflict between Cuba and the United States, and for at least a year has been attempting to prepare the Cuban people for war. He clearly believes that if any hostilities begin they would be fierce, with considerable fighting and loss of life on both sides. He has said, for example, that "if they dare to invade our country, more Yankees will die here than in World War II," and that "millions of Yankees will die." But, because he may doubt that the Cuban civilian populace would put up any serious resistance to US forces or rally to fight beside their own armed forces, he has used almost every opportunity over the last year or so to try to mobilize their support. He has repeatedly called on them to be prepared for a two-front war: a conventional conflict and an unconventional one in which the people would form guerrilla resistance groups. "We're not like the Christians of ancient Rome," he has said, "who meekly surrendered."

More typically, however, these clarion calls reveal Castro's increasingly paranoid vision of Cuba fighting massing forces of opposition alone. On 24 October in a highly unusual prepared speech that was implicitly critical of the Soviet Union, he said that we should "not expect anyone to defend us . . . but to defend ourselves." This growing sense of beleaguerment and isolation has become one of the dominant aspects of Castro's public performance over the last year or so.

Emotions and thoughts of the kind that have preoccupied Castro have in other cases often culminated in a belligerent sense of extreme personal isolation. In Castro's case there have been hints in at least two of his highly personal speeches in his home region of such a catastrophic vision of his and the Revolution's denouement. "As long as there are several armed men in this country . . . as long as there is a single armed man," he has said, "we will fight to the last." Thus, just as his Revolution began in the Sierra Maestra with seven armed men, one cannot rule out the possibility that Castro, in his darkest broodings, may actually conceive of it being progressively reduced to that original contingent again. At the end, as in the beginning, Castro and a handful of trusted lieutenants would fight a noble struggle against the encircling forces of his many enemies.

The Outlook

For Castro's Credibility and Popularity. Castro's charismatic appeal through the years consisted in large part of a complex of illusions that now seem one by one to be dissolving. Over the last two years, he has fumbled, and lost his place in the reams of notes and papers that he now usually brings to the podium when he speaks. At the Party Congress speech in December 1980, he complained that his papers were slipping from the podium, and a carpenter was quickly summoned to repair it. Occasionally he has dropped entire paragraphs or thoughts from speeches, and then reinserted them where they didn't belong. On 24 October he limped onto the stage and explained that "in trying . . . to fight sedentariness and obesity by engaging in sports, I suffered a small fracture of one of the toes of my right foot." It is quite unlikely that Castro would have called attention to the injury—especially in the manner he did—in previous years.

These and other changes in his oratorical style, which would be insignificant for most leaders, may be highly relevant indicators of his diminishing charisma. The

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macho illusion of Castro the *caballo* (stallion) that worked to his advantage in the past, will probably continue to be undermined by the frailties and slips of the kind he is now making in public. The illusion he promoted successfully of being a prestidigitory problem solver has suffered since late 1979. His appeal, based on the popular view that subordinate officials were responsible for mismanagement and poor planning, has undoubtedly also declined as he gets more of the blame. In addition, his extreme mood changes during the last two years probably have increased the concerns of many Cubans about what he might do next. In the 1960s and '70s, he capitalized on his penchant for spontaneity and surprise in policy decisions, but innovation in those days tended to reflect utopian visions.

On a few occasions Castro has also lied blatantly in public. When he told a Nicaraguan audience in July 1980 that in Cuba "we have solved the unemployment problem," he was undoubtedly confident that that part of this speech would not be replayed in Cuba. He did tell a mass Cuban audience a few months later, however, that "the standard of living will improve progressively in the next five-year period." The Cuban people—especially the youth—are probably less likely than in the past to overlook these prevarications or to attribute them to their leader's once appealing flair for the extravagant.

As a result of these and other developments, Castro's popularity is probably lower than ever before and is likely to continue deteriorating. Given recent trends and his frame of mind, he is unlikely to stop lecturing condescendingly to the youth, trivializing the myths of his own insurgency, and dwelling on apocalyptic themes. Even if he were to correct these and other errors, nonetheless, his credibility for being able to satisfy the people's most basic material aspirations may already be hopelessly compromised. Similarly, his ability to motivate and mobilize the populace for "defense and production"—or for any new pet themes—is likely to erode steadily as more cynical and disappointed youths come of age.

Thus, there is probably only a small chance that Castro will again be able to play the prophetic role as charismatic leader of the Cuban Revolution as he did for so many years. Ironically, the more he feels compelled to resume that role under the pressure of persistent problems, the greater the likelihood that his efforts will be counterproductive. In addition, Castro's preference to depend increasingly on a group of hardline advisers is also likely to erode his popularity further. Some of these officials, like the ruthless Ramiro Valdes, who in December 1979 was reappointed interior minister to deal with rising crime and discontent, are widely feared. Virtually all of them are intimate friends of Castro, colleagues since the insurgency in the 1950s, and veterans of the military and security services. Most are crude and dogmatic men who probably have been fueling some of the more unstable tendencies that Castro has demonstrated.

For Significant Popular Opposition. As the baby-boom generations come of age through the 1980s, the possibilities of significant popular opposition to Castro will probably increase. Unless he can export or exile a large number of people, rising youth unemployment will contribute to high rates of crime, vandalism, and other antisocial behavior. Antiregime wall writings, sabotage, and perhaps even isolated acts of terrorism against lower- or middle-level officials will become more likely. The possibility of groups of idle youths spontaneously rioting in Havana or other cities, or engaging in street demonstrations will increase. If Castro were to vacillate or show leniency in dealing with such outbursts, they might escalate into larger, more serious challenges to the regime. Over the last two years Castro has been profoundly ambivalent about how best to motivate and incorporate the youth into the Revolution, and he has made a number of errors. The chances are high that both of these trends will continue indefinitely.

On balance, nonetheless, there is probably only about one chance in three that rising social and economic tensions associated largely with the arrival of the baby-boom generations will result in significant opposition any time in the 1980s. Unlike Poland, where the Catholic Church has helped for years to give focus

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and hope to the dissatisfied, there are no independent institutions in Cuba that could serve a similar purpose. In addition, many of the youths will adopt strategies like those of their parents, refraining from taking risks that might land them in prison, while hoping for an opportunity to emigrate to the United States. The most significant deterrent to organized resistance will continue to be the large, well-trained and equipped military and security forces that are controlled by Castro and his younger brother Raul.

There is a good chance that Castro will decide at almost any time to confront forces of domestic opposition aggressively in a repressive campaign of crackdowns and mass mobilizations. He did this in the 1968 "revolutionary offensive," when discontent was high, and on a smaller scale again last year. The 1968 minicultural revolution was aimed at silencing rising opposition to the regime, at rallying support by putting large numbers of people into "voluntary" agricultural labor, and at forcing ideological purification, especially among the youth. It included the purge of a "microfaction" of Communist Party officials whom Castro blamed for being insufficiently revolutionary and nationalistic. In his "secret speech" in December 1979, he revealed that he had considered such a strategy again: "we do not intend to do traumatic things, we do not intend to unleash a 'cultural revolution' here." Since then, however, the pressures have continued to rise, and with them the chances that Castro will decide—as he has so often in the past—belligerently to seize the initiative with his opponents. The likelihood will be high, in addition, that another revolutionary offensive would hold the United States up as the scapegoat, and include a purge of officials blamed for being too "soft."

For a Coup Against Castro. There is no reason to suspect that any top military or Communist Party leaders are so dissatisfied that they are plotting against Castro. For them, his legitimacy as the Revolution's maximum leader and guide is probably still quite high, even though many must have more doubts than they did a few years ago. These top echelons of Cuba's ruling class do not suffer the deprivations or make the same sacrifices as the populace at large. All of them have passed the innumerable tests of their loyalty and obedience to Castro that the nearly 23-year steeplechase course of the Revolution has required. Perhaps no more than a few hundred individuals have any real leverage, and all of them are probably regularly observed by the Castro brothers and their hardline advisers.

But, disagreement among key leaders and interest groups is probably higher than in many years, and it is likely to get worse. By frequently adopting the policies of his hardline advisers, Castro has reduced the influence of such key moderates as Vice President Carlos Rafael Rodriguez. The moderates probably have numerous allies among younger technocrats and administrators throughout the party and government. These officials are believed to give priority to rational planning and economic development at home and to be less interested in Cuba's international "duties" and aspirations. There is no reason to believe, however, that moderate leaders at any level have actual or potential allies among leading officers of the military and security forces. That could change gradually as officials and officers of a new generation assume greater responsibility through the remainder of the decade, especially if confidence in Castro continues to deteriorate.

To have the slightest chance, a coup on the part of disgruntled Cuban figures would have to be mounted simultaneously against Castro, his brother, and their key hardline advisers. As Castro's designated heir, second in charge of the party and the government, and minister of the armed forces, Raul Castro is second in power only to his brother. Though he utterly lacks Castro's charismatic ability, he has built a large and powerful military and security apparatus that from all appearances is completely loyal to him and his brother. There is almost no chance that he would move against Castro unless he were convinced that his brother were mentally incapable of continuing. Raul's ties with the USSR are older and probably stronger than Castro's, and he would keep Cuba in a close Soviet orbit.

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Despite the Castro brothers' seemingly totalitarian control of the key levers of power, it is possible for the first time in 20 years to contemplate scenarios in which Cuban figures might try to topple the Castros. Perhaps the best reason is that Castro himself has begun publicly to muse about his growing vulnerability. Although the possibility seems low at present, over the next decade some combination of the following forces could result in profound political change in Cuba, including attempts to overthrow the Castro brothers:

- Mounting social unrest—especially in Havana and the eastern provinces—spearheaded by disaffected members of the younger generation.
- A further decline of economic conditions and expectations.
- Irrational actions by Castro perceived as provoking military conflict with the United States or an allied Latin American country.
- Serious concern among top Soviet leaders that Castro and his clique were, for their own purposes, seeking to provoke a confrontation between the USSR and the United States.
- The coalescence among Cubans now in their teens, twenties, or thirties of a sense of anti-Castro generational solidarity that crossed military-civilian lines.
- The coalescence in the armed forces of a group of nationalistic young officers more interested in Cuba's economic development and social tranquillity than in foreign involvements.

For Castro and the United States. Tensions between the United States and the Castro regime will continue to rise. The Cuban leader will tend to blame the United States for most of his problems and to become even more fearful that punitive actions will be taken against him. He will be inclined to identify all voices of opposition and criticism—in fact anyone not sympathizing with his regime—as enemies. The chances will be very high that he will pursue vendettas against leaders or governments that he considers proxies of the United States. The Turbay government in Colombia was the target of a Cuban-sponsored guerrilla incursion last March, and Castro so despises that leader that additional clandestine activities against him are likely. Jamaican Prime Minister Seaga, also viewed by Castro as a puppet of the United States, is very likely to be the target of Cuban subversive efforts. At the same time Castro will also continue vigorously to seek major revolutionary breakthroughs in other Latin American countries, especially in El Salvador and Guatemala.

Confrontations aimed directly at embarrassing the United States will also be more likely. The readily available United States Interests Section and citizens in Havana and the Guantanamo Naval Base will be increasingly likely targets of abuse. The chances are good that Castro will engineer demonstrations—like those in the spring of 1980—against the United States both in Havana and in eastern Cuba. Mass rallies against the United States could also be accompanied by orchestrated defections of relatively large numbers of Cubans onto the grounds of US facilities. Anti-US rhetoric is likely to become more shrill and menacing. Cuban military forces may go into alert modes and even make threatening gestures against our reconnaissance overflights. There is also a very good chance that Castro will increase anti-US broadcasting and include programing aimed at subverting American minority groups. He has broadly hinted that he would do so once Radio Marti begins operating from the United States.

Even more extreme or irrational actions that could lead to military conflict between the United States and Cuba will be more likely than ever before. Demographic and generational pressures will undoubtedly continue to rise and Castro will be more and more tempted to release large numbers into exile in the United States. Tensions could become so acute in fact that he will decide to carry out bizarre schemes to limit or contain the threat at home. He could, for instance, herd hundreds of thousands of aspiring emigres into concentration camps on the northern coast and then encourage them to leave or be rescued by whatever means. Castro will also be more likely to use his intelligence service to conduct clandestine activities aimed at fomenting violence in Puerto Rico and elsewhere in the United States. It will also be more likely that he will order Cuban agents to conduct terrorism in the United States.

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Through his nearly 23 years in power, Castro has operated within a range of action much wider than most world leaders. Even when conditions in Cuba and its foreign relations are favorable and when Castro is in a positive mood, he is less predictable than most. Furthermore, when he is angry, frustrated, or threatened, his behavior has generally tended to be even more erratic and improvisational. Pressures on him now are probably greater than at any time since the early 1960s,[3] and he has made more serious mistakes over the last two years—the visits by Cuban exiles, the repeated promises of a grim future, etc.—than in any comparable period. Most ominous in this context are the numerous indications that his recent brooding pessimism reflects an increasingly belligerent and fatalistic mood. Thus, Castro will in all likelihood be an even more dangerous adversary than in the past.

There will even be a chance—perhaps in the range of 20 percent—that under pressure and great psychological strain, he would throw caution to the winds and try to provoke a military conflict with the United States. He could see this as providing him a final opportunity to rally the youth to the Revolution, to strengthen his regime and personal position, and to attract substantial international support. In reality, it would be no more suicidal than certain guerrilla and military actions he took as a young revolutionary and would be consistent with his proclivity through the years to seek renewal and vindication in heroic activities launched against the odds. He might gamble that Cuba's powerful military forces, joined by popular militia and guerrillas, would be able to withstand US assaults long enough for international opinion to turn strongly in his favor. He would then once again be at the center of a major international crisis out of which he could emerge again triumphant.

[3] *Cuba's Castro: Reactions of an Aging Revolutionary to His Ailing Revolution*, 80-10252, June 1980, appraises Castro's personality and psychology.

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